

The Truth Part 6: The Righteousness of God

The Truth

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I'd ask you to take your hymnals this morning and turn to hymn #408, "Blessed Assurance."

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior, all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love."

Let's take our bulletin hymn, "Our Savior God we praise," as sung to the tune of "Come ye sinners poor and needy," and we will sing there are four stanzas, we will sing each stanza and the chorus is at the bottom and we will sing it behind each stanza and I'm gonna ask Jan to play all the way through for us.

Thank you and welcome to each one this morning. We're thankful for the Lord's mercy in bringing us here. I was just thinking about that song, if we are here, we have reason to praise him. We have been saved by his grace and mercy in Christ. We have reason to praise him. If we've been given some measure of good health, we have reason to praise him. And the list could go on and on and on. We have reason to praise our God and no

reason for complaint. We're thankful that he has been merciful to us and for his goodness and grace to us.

Wednesday night is the second Wednesday, our fellowship meal together. We're hoping everybody will come and be a part of that. This morning we want to pray for Billy and Jewel's daughter, Joy, who had some surgery this week and we ask the Lord's help and mercy and healing to her. We pray for our missionary brethren who preach the Gospel. We pray for those preachers here in this country that sound the clear note of the Gospel of grace and the glory of Christ. And we pray for ourselves. We're a needy people and me especially as the most needy one. We ask that the Lord would help us and have mercy upon us.

Let's pray.

Our Father, this morning we come in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we enter into this place and this time and this service, there are a host of things that Satan would use to distract us from the one thing that we are to do above all things and that is to worship you and to praise you and to fix our minds upon you and receive your word, those promises that are yea and amen in Christ. Lord, we know that they're either true, they're either all true or they're none true, and we pray that we might view all of the promises of your word, those covenant promises, that we might view every one of them as true, as proven time and time again to your people over all of time and over all the earth.

We ask this morning that you would forgive us, that we are sinners, Lord, in ourselves and in this world and life we can never and will never be anything else in ourselves, but we pray that we might be enabled by faith to look and to see ourselves this morning in the Lord Jesus Christ as your people, that we might, Lord, be able to look to our Savior and not to ourselves, to his accomplishments and not to our weaknesses and problems, and that we might have, Lord, in the looking a grateful and a thankful heart and be able to see by faith that which you would have us to see.

We pray that everything that you do we might be thankful for, and we pray for these that are sick. We ask your help and grace upon them. We pray for those that are away. We ask that you might bring them safely back. And for all your people here and as they are scattered in this world, we ask your blessings and your help, and we ask that they might know this day the reality of your presence and power in their lives. We ask that in these things that are said this morning, we might speak according to the truth, that we might speak according to your word regardless of man's opinions, regardless of what religious commentators say. May we, by grace, speak what thus saith the Lord, and may all that is said and done, may all that preached be to the glory and praise of your high and holy name. We ask it all in your Son. Amen.

Hymn #211, "Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove." Then Brother Tim, if you will wait on the congregation.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.

In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise:
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.

And shall we then for ever live
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
And thine to us so great!

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers;
Come, shed abroad the Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Turn with me today to the first chapter of the book of Romans, Romans 1. I want to read to you two verses beginning in verse 16.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the

Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

I want to continue this morning on this series that I've called "The Truth," essential elements of the truth, and Paul called the Gospel, the Gospel that he speaks of right here, he called the Gospel the word of the truth. The word of the truth. And so we know by what he says here that this being true, another essential element of the truth has to do with the righteousness of God.

I remember a long time ago Brother Scott Richardson and I talking and I remember something he said in his unique way of saying it. He said the Gospel has something to do with the righteousness of God. He said it's got something to do with the righteousness of God and that's exactly right because that's exactly what Paul says about the Gospel, about the word of the truth here in verse 17. He says, "For therein," in the Gospel, in the word of the truth, "is the righteousness of God revealed," displayed, unfolded. And this phrase "the righteousness of God" is used in this book some eight times. Strangely, we will not anywhere find the phrase "the righteousness of Christ." I know Christ is God but we don't find that phrase in the Bible because this righteousness of God is not Christ keeping the law for us as some have said. You will not find that in this book, that Christ kept the law for us. What we do find is that he fulfilled the law. He fulfilled the law but this was not by some kind of vicarious law-keeping, and when we hear him speak, this same apostle, about the obedience of Christ, he's speaking of that obedience that he talked about also in Philippians 2 when his obedience is his "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross." And that's what the obedience of Christ, the obedience unto death is all about, as a matter of fact, in Romans 5 this obedience is really his one obedient act. That's not to say that Christ was not obedient to all the law of God. That's not to say that he did not keep all the law of God as a Jew, as a man.

But that obedience is not the obedience that saves us, that obedience is not this righteousness that he's speaking of, and if we ask ourselves from the beginning of this word, from the beginning of the Bible all the way to the end of it what righteousness really is and is really about, we find that it has to do with justice. Righteousness has to do with justice. It is not personal holiness. It is not moral perfection. As a matter of fact, in one of the first places that we find it used in the Bible, it is when Moses is giving this instruction to the judges over Israel and this is what he says in Leviticus 19, "I am the LORD your God." Therefore, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour." He was saying to them, "You will judge in righteousness, you will judge justly without regard to whether a person is poor or rich, nothing or mighty."

It is to be a just judgment because holiness has to do with how God is. God is separate. That's what holiness means, separate, and holiness has to do with how God is, but righteousness has to do with what God does. What he does. And I always think of the words of Abraham as he pled with the Lord on the behalf of Lot and all the inhabitants of the city when he says in Genesis 18 when God said he destroyed all of Sodom and

Gomorrah, he said, "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked. That be far from thee." He knew Lot was in Sodom and failing as he was, Lot was yet a believer and so this next question that Abraham asked in his kind of intercession for Lot, he says, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" In other words, "It wouldn't be like you, God, God as you are, to destroy the righteous with the wicked. If there's somebody righteous in Sodom or Gomorrah or any of the cities of the plain, it would not be like you, it would not be characteristic of the righteous God to destroy them." And he went down to 50 and to 40, you know the story. He pled with him and he said, "If there are 10 righteous in these cities, you wouldn't destroy them." And then it all ends and there is one man who is really delivered out of Sodom and that is, as Peter says, righteous Lot.

God would not do unrighteously and we miss the whole of Scripture, we miss the whole of the Bible concerning God when we miss how he identifies himself in Isaiah 45:21 and he says this about himself, "I'm the only God there is. I'm the one of a kind. Besides me there is no other and this is the way I am, I'm a just God and a Savior." And he doesn't say there, as some have said, "I am a just God but I'm a Savior." No, it's an "and" in there, "I'm a just God and a Savior," and how he can be a just God and a Savior is the righteousness of God.

How can he do that? How can he punish sin which he said he's gonna do? How can he not clear the guilty? How can he be a just, inflexibly just God and at the same time be a Savior? That is the righteousness of God. And how he can and how he has is what is really revealed in the Gospel and the Gospel as we know according to the Scriptures, has to do with how Christ died, how that he died according to the Scriptures, how it is the preaching of the cross, the preaching of Christ and him crucified which is the wisdom of God. Christ is the wisdom of God in so many ways but in one way primarily, he is the wisdom of God in how he can be a just God and a Savior. He's the answer of that eternal question, that most vital question that we can ask and that Job asked who said, "How can man who's born of woman, who drinks iniquity like water, how can man be just with God?" And that's what the Bible is all about. The truth has to do with the righteousness of God.

Look over farther to Romans 3, beginning in verse 20. Paul writes, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Not your deeds. Not Christ's deeds when he lived here on this earth. Salvation is not about law. Salvation is about grace and mercy in Christ and him crucified.

He says, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Why men preach law when it only reveals what we are as sinners and only reveals it to us when God's pleased to, I do not know.

"But now the righteousness of God," there it is again, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." Actually here it is even the righteousness of God

which is by the faith of Jesus Christ and it is unto and upon all them that believe. That's what many people have no understanding of, that the greatest man of faith that ever lived on this earth was the Lord Jesus Christ. He trusted the Father. He trusted every covenant pledge. He trusted God to do what he would do in consequence with what Christ would do.

Then he says, "For all have sinned," Jew or Gentile, doesn't matter, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." That's not just something you can say repeating something called the Roman road, that's the absolute state of all men by nature, and in Adam all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But now look at this next verse, "Being justified," being justified or having been justified. What does "justify" mean? It means "declared righteous." It has to do with our standing in the sight of Almighty God. Being justified, being declared righteous, how can we be declared righteous justly by God when we are sinners?

He said, "being justified freely." That word means without a cause. It's even translated somewhere else as without a cause. They hated Christ without a cause. "Justify freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We're not justified freely any other way. We could not be justified freely, we could not be declared righteous by God in his holy character and in his just person any other way but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Christ Jesus, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," that isn't even to be there, that's italicized words that are added. It's he has been sent forth, he was sent forth by God as a propitiation, as a propitiatory sacrifice, as a mercy seat to turn away the wrath and displeasure of God and to put men in favor with God "through faith in his blood." You can do anything you want to, you can talk about faith, you can talk about Jesus, but apart from the cross death of Jesus Christ, apart from his blood that was shed, apart from that sacrifice for sin which satisfied the law and justice of God, you have no Gospel, you have no redemption and you have no salvation.

Why did it take God's blood? Why did it take Christ dying on the cross? He says, "to declare his righteousness," God's righteousness, "for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." All those Old Testament saints, everybody before the cross of Christ such as Abraham who was viewed as righteous before God. People who say we are justified at the cross, insist upon that, wonder how Abraham was counted righteous. They were justified through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus. Christ was set forth from old eternity as this one sacrifice for their sins forever, and all their sins were forgiven on the same basis as ours are if they're forgiven. Not two Gospels. Not two ways of putting away sin. Just the righteousness of God in Christ.

He says, "To declare," also, "I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Everybody from the cross all the way on until the coming of Christ, God like he was with those Old Testament saints was righteous in forgiving their sin through the coming sacrifice of Christ. Everyone who

believes on Christ, every New Testament saint, God will be just and he'll also be the justifier. He'll be the one that declares them righteous and brings them to believe on Christ.

Everywhere is the justice of God. Everywhere it's this righteousness of God. Christ crucified is all our righteousness and he always was and he always will be. Whenever the Lord was giving that prophecy to Daniel concerning the Messiah, that prophecy that men run off with and they make timetables and charts and here's what the prophecy was all about: it was about the Messiah, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city," that's God's elect and his Zion, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness." To bring in everlasting righteousness.

You see, that's what Jeremiah called the coming Messiah, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." Who he is and what he did on the cross is the only righteousness there is. That's the only righteousness that can exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Remember what Christ said? He said, "Except your righteousness," which long before he'd already told us all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, he said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," which was a religious righteousness, a self-righteousness, a works righteousness, a righteousness that they performed, he said and they were viewed as the cream of the crop and Christ said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you're gonna perish." There will be so many that gather on this day in our area and all throughout the whole earth this morning in the name of God, in the name of Jesus, in the name of righteousness but they will perish unless God saves them mercifully because the only righteousness they know is the one that they performed, just filthy rags.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 5 when Paul writes in that last verse, verse 21 in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, he says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What does that verse say? It says that this is something that God has done. Past tense. He hath done it. He hath made somebody righteous. He hath made something. He does it in a way that displays his righteousness, his justice, and saves his people. Christ was not and never became a sinner in his person. This notion and foolishness that he had to be what I am in order to save me is just tommyrot. He had to be what I could not be or else there was no need of him to come. He came and he was not a sinner in his person and neither are we or ever will be in this life righteous in our persons.

So many people have fallen under this blindness so as to view themselves a lot like the people in that fable and fairy tale did about the Emperor's New Clothes. These two crooks or however many it was, they spread a lie. They convinced the king of the lie, they convinced the people of the lie who said that they were able to make new clothes that only they could see. Only they could see? And so the king fell for it and he went about with no clothes on and everybody said, "Oh, that's so beautiful!" Well, one said it, we might as well all say it, it's all beautiful then. "Oh, he's got such a beautiful garment on!"

He thought so. They thought so. "Oh, he's so....!" It's just the same thing with these people duped in thinking that they have a righteousness of themselves. But it was a little boy as the parade went by and the king went by in his nakedness, there was a little boy who just hollered out, "He's naked!" I guess I'm that little boy. You don't have a personal righteousness. You might be led by some to think you do but you know you don't. God knows you don't. There's nothing good about you unless God sees you in his Son. You're naked. Those filthy rags you drape yourself in, they're just nakedness.

What this says is that the sins of God's people were imputed to him. He was made a sin offering for us. No type in the Old Testament ever in any way seemed to indicate that what happened when they were offering they changed. When a lamb was slain, it looked like a lamb, it died like a lamb. What happened when Christ died is what Isaiah says in chapter 53, that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of his people. Sin cannot in its essence be transferred but guilt can be imputed. The sins of his people were imputed to him and the righteousness of God is imputed to us. They said, "Well, that's just legal." Hallelujah! Hallelujah because this book is about the justice of God in saving his people, it's about the righteousness of God that he is right to do something, having put away their sins in Christ's death on the cross. It's very legal because it's God's justice. God must do right. He must punish sin and he counts all he did as his elect doing it in him. All Christ did. Righteousness is not about what we perform, it's about what Christ accomplished in his death on our behalf. It's all his work and his work is the only work of righteousness.

Live righteously. Righteousness is foreign to me naturally. The only righteousness I have is by grace in Jesus Christ. He's the Lord our righteousness and there's only one. I think this week I saw this as clearly. In Isaiah 32:17 God says, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." He didn't say you could work righteousness and therefore feel good about yourself. No, there's a definite article in there, "And the work." Just one work of righteousness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace." You'll never have it in any works of your own. It'll only be in the work of righteousness of Christ on the cross, "the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever." Talk about getting assurance after you're save by what you do, oh my, if you ever get assurance at any time based on what you do, what you feel, or what people say you do, you're in real trouble because that's not righteousness, that's sin.

We speak of the blood and righteousness of Christ. The blood, the blood of Christ is in reality that he shed for his people, that is righteousness, it is the righteousness of God to save them, it is an exclusive work for an exclusive people. If God sends any of them to hell, it'll be unrighteousness. If he takes anybody to heaven apart from Christ's death, it'll be unrighteousness. And yet both are the main thoughts of our day. "Oh, Christ died for everybody. But there's a whole lot of people going to hell." Nobody he died for will go to hell. That wouldn't be righteousness. "Well, I believe he's gonna take everybody to heaven." No, not apart from the dying of Jesus Christ. His death must be their death. The only way he can make an end of sin for us is by the sacrifice of himself. For this reason it's said in the Scripture to have been imputed to them or reckoned by God himself to their account. Christ fulfilled the law, he satisfied the law and justice of God by his death.

People say, "Well, you folks don't believe in the law." Oh, yes we do. "You don't believe that the law is holy." Oh, yes we do but we believe what the Bible says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. We know that Christ satisfied the law by fulfilling its punishment. Satisfied it and that's the righteousness of God because the soul that sinneth shall surely die. He's got to die. There's no going back and Christ living the law for him so therefore he can be righteous. No, he's got to die. That's why it says Christ is the end of the law for everyone that believeth. The law has no claim over God's people. Why? Because the righteous. The law is not made for a righteous man.

Look over in the book of Romans 4. I believe some people have forgotten this chapter. In verse 1 he says, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." The only righteousness that there is is the righteousness of God that he gives as a gift. It can't be by your working before you were saved, it cannot be improved by your working after you're saved. If it was, it would be a debt. He'd pay you just what you deserve which would be hell.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth," that declares righteous, "the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And the illustration he gives is David. Oh, David the sweet psalmist of Israel. David the man after God's own heart. Yeah, David the adulterer. David the murderer. David the disobedient one. He says, David, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes," or reckons or charges or accounts to his account, "righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Woo, talk about these people walking around saying, "How are you today?" "Blessed. I'm blessed." Blessed is the man that the Lord will not impute his sins to him. He will not charge his sins to him. How can he do that? The righteousness of God. He cannot impute his sins to him because he imputed them to the Lord Jesus Christ who died in the full payment and satisfaction of justice against those sins. It's amazing, utterly amazing. Paul reminds us that he was, Abraham was righteous even before the law. If it was of all righteousness, how was he? Because he was made the righteousness of God in Christ, in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 22 says, "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if," or here it's since, "we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." If we believe, if God gives us faith to believe, then our sins were imputed to Christ. Our believing doesn't impute our sins to Christ. If we believe and he bore our sins in his own body on the tree and God enabled us to believe that by faith, we're righteous in God's sight because he said, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for," or because of. "our justification. Therefore being justified," having been justified,

having been declared righteous by the righteous God, "by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." God gives his people faith to believe that he has dealt with them in Christ Jesus and all is well because he has made them the righteousness of God in him.

Paul says being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath. That's the good news. That's the Gospel. That's the word of the truth where the righteousness of God is revealed. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, "But of him," of God, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We are in Christ Jesus by grace and Christ is made unto us, he's accounted to us for our righteousness.

Men can talk about personal righteousness, they can talk about imparted righteousness or infused righteousness, but the only righteousness there is is positional, it is in him, made the righteousness of God in him. Did you ever notice the more people talk about imparted righteousness or imputed righteousness or personal righteousness, the more they get to talking about them, the less they talk about Christ and him crucified? I'm telling you, the less they want to know about him. The imputed righteousness of God in Christ crucified which he imputes to his people and by faith, that one faith that he gives and that it says is in him is the gift of righteousness. It's received by the gift of faith. It brings forth the gift of repentance whereby we repent of every other imagined righteousness. Every other.

Oh, I love to think about it when God said of Noah, he said, "I've seen you righteous." Now this is before he walked into that ark. He said, "You only have I seen righteous in this generation. Go in the ark." That's the righteousness of God. When he sees us righteous in his Son, he doesn't see any sin because Christ put it away, he sees his obedience, he sees him, he sees us complete in him just like he saw Lot, righteous Lot. Somebody will say, "Well, Lot weren't living where he ought to." No, you might not be either. "Lot wasn't doing like he ought to. Lot hadn't raised his daughters in a Christian home or those men wouldn't have talked to him like that." I tell you what I see, I see that God called him righteous and just like he told Peter on that housetop in Joppa when he lowered down those unclean things that an Israelite was not to eat and Peter said, "I can't. I've never eaten any unclean thing." God said, "What I have cleansed don't you call unclean." Don't you call Lot unrighteous. Don't you call David unrighteous.

Paul said of his own people, those Israelites, "For they be ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Why? 1. They're going about trying to establish their own righteousness. That's how I know they're lost. And 2, the law has never ended for them. It still worries them. It's still their rule of life. It's like an anvil tied around their neck. They have no liberty. They have no joy and they can't because they're always looking at the law, they're always putting up the 10 Commandments. They know nothing of the law satisfied in Christ, made honorable by him. Paul in that same chapter says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Somebody said when God gives you a new heart, you'll start acting righteously. No. That new heart is simply the heart of faith.

When God gives you faith, you'll believe unto righteousness because you'll believe and trust and rely only on Christ and him crucified.

"Well," you say, "doesn't the Bible still say something about us doing righteousness?" Absolutely. Turn over to 1 John 3. First of all, look at verse 29 of chapter 2, "If you know that he is righteous, you know that every man that doeth righteousness is born of him." That word "do" scares us, doesn't it?

Look over in chapter 3, verse 7, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Verse 10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." It sounds like to me all of this whether they're the children of God or the children of the devil, it's known by them doing righteousness and yet by what most people call righteousness such as the Pharisees did and the scribes did, we know that isn't righteousness, don't we? What is it to do righteousness, for a believer to do righteousness?

Well, I believe the answer, the key to understanding this is right here in the midst of this text in the example that God gives us in the two men, Cain and Abel. Verse 12 he says, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?" Now there's no doubt that Cain killing Abel was an unrighteous act, an unjust act, but it was just the consequence of his unrighteousness. Well, didn't they have the same nature? Weren't they born into the same environment and place? Didn't they have the same parents? What do we know about them? Just one thing primarily, that Abel offered up to God a sacrifice that typified Christ. That's all we know, and that the fact was he killed his brother. He killed his brother because he was unrighteous and his brother was righteous. The first murder in this world took place over righteousness, doctrine, the truth. Abel believed the truth. How did he know the truth? His father, Adam, had set it forth before him and all that he did because he learned it from God. When he sinned, God showed him the only way that a righteous God can have mercy and grace, he killed an innocent victim in his place and he covered Adam in these tunics or coats of skins, the skins of these animals that had died and thus he pictured that robe of righteousness that God puts on his people, the Lord Jesus Christ.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. It doesn't say he lived a better life. It doesn't say he was an [unintelligible] heart. Doesn't say anything else about him but he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift, God accepting his gift. Cain took the works of his own hands. He had grown some stuff, he wanted to come and worship and be religious and everything else, but he didn't want to obey God. He wanted to offer maybe his best but your best, just like Cain's best, is not good enough. The blood of Abel, the blood he offered, not his own but the offering of another, a sacrifice, a substitute in his place for his sins, God accepted him and this is what God told Cain, he said, "If you had done well, if you had done righteousness, you would have been accepted." So doing righteousness here is nothing more but it is altogether believing and trusting in Christ and him crucified.

Being justified, having been justified, we've been justified, declared, made righteous freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He's made us accepted in the beloved. So when you know these things, you know that most everything that passes for Gospel in our day is not the Gospel at all, it's what Paul called another Gospel. Why? Because rather than reveal the righteousness of God, it makes a mock of the righteousness of God. It has men taken to heaven on any basis: their decision, their free will. It has people cast into hell who Christ died for, therefore injustice. Justice, a just God and a Savior, just and justifier of him that believeth on Jesus. Brother Scott was right and he was right about a lot of things, but he said the Gospel, the truth has got something to do with the righteousness of God. God help us to know this essential element of the truth and believe it.

Our Father, we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the Lord our righteousness. We thank you for the grace that made him to be sin in our place and then made us the righteousness of God in him. We praise your name. We pray that you'd give us strength to forsake what men say is the truth and to believe the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. We thank you this day and we pray in his name. Amen.